

Lou Mansolillo

From: Janice McAleer <jmcaleer1@verizon.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2025 11:51 AM
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: Old Growth Forest Protection Act 2025 H 5294

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to request your support of the Old Growth Forest Protection Act 2025 H 5294. Rhode island's forests are an important resource and managing them wisely is critical. We need a forward-thinking plan and state laws to protect our remaining forests on public land.

I especially request support for bringing back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program. As I understand it, Rhode Island is the only state that doesn't have these protections in place. After 2007, there has been no state office responsible for carrying on their important work of identifying these vital areas of biodiversity and deciding how to best manage them.

In view of a rapidly changing climate, these carefully-managed forests are an important part of resiliency planning. Having gone on several state forestry events, I was very concerned that, once the trees were clear-cut, the land was barren, subject to erosion, invasive brushy plants moving in, and with piles of debris (smaller branches, etc.), stacked up like kindling for a potential forest fire. On the other hand, after watching the aftermath of the Queen River Preserve fire a few years ago, I was amazed and encouraged to see what survived and what rebounded. I do not believe that the clear-cut areas I've seen in some logged RI forests would be left in the reasonably positive condition I've seen in Queen River. (take a walk if you get a chance!)

Without going on and on, I'm asking you to please pass H 5294 to establish legal protections for our forests and also reinstate a Natural Heritage Program as part of a forward-looking environmental resiliency plan.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Janice McAleer
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North Kingstown, RI 02852